

ON THE FIRING LINE

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OF

*The North-West Mounted
Police on the Trail.*

by Bob Walworth



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ON THE FIRING LINE

OR

THE NORTH-WEST MOUNTED POLICE
ON THE TRAIL



THE AMERICAN INDIAN
SERIES NUMBER 9

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CHAPTER I.

WAYLAID IN THE TIMBER.

Young Jim Calgarry saw the flash of a gun in the bushes even as he threw himself forward upon the ground.

The bullet sang angrily past his ear, and must have given him a nasty wound if nothing more, only for his prompt action.

Calgarry was not wholly taken by surprise, for he had heard rumors at the trading-post two days before that it was very likely there would be trouble with the Indians; for some of the half breeds, under Louis Riel had been fomenting trouble among the Crees and Swampy Sioux, and there was even talk of the scattered Chippewas, known in the Northwest Territory as Ojibways, joining forces with the dissatisfied ones.

Calgarry had been down to the post to dispose of an extra bundle of pelts, and secure a few needed supplies.

His father's cabin stood upon the bank of a tributary to the great Saskatchewan river.

At this time the Canadian Pacific railroad was in the process of building, and had reached Winnipeg or thereabouts; but what is today a grand city with modern skyscrapers was then but a collection of primitive houses, with a population consisting mainly of railroad workers, surveyors, traders, trappers, In-

dians, hunters and the post of the Canadian mounted police, destined to be of such great importance in the short but bloody war with the Indians and half breeds.

Jim had been brought up on danger, and was not likely to shrink when confronted by any signs of it around him.

His brother was in the mounted police, and making a name as a fearless fighter.

It had been an easy run down to the post in his bull boat, but ascending the river was quite another thing, and Jim labored for many hours each day in breasting the current.

However, he was now on the last lap, and looked forward confidently to reaching his home before many hours.

Having gone ashore to cook a bite of dinner, and at the same time stretch his limbs, he had had his attention attracted by some slight sound, and snatching up his rifle started to investigate its meaning, when, seeing the flash of a painted body among the leaves he had hastily thrown himself down, just in time to escape the bullet that apparently hungered for his life.

In this rude manner did the young fellow discover that the rumors of a rebellion on the part of the half breeds and reds was true, and that they were already starting on the warpath, determined to put every venturesome settler's cabin to the torch, and scalp the inmates.

As the home of his parents was one of the furthest removed from the outposts of civilization it may be understood that Jim had been urged on to unusual

exertions on his return trip, fearful lest he arrive too late to warn the old folks of their peril.

And now this attack in the lonely woods bordering the river told that the danger was not exaggerated, but real.

There could be no telling the number of these enemies who had thus waylaid him on his return.

There might be only one Indian in the immediate neighborhood, and at the same time a dozen were apt to be hiding in the undergrowth, eager to pot him.

Jim guessed that the former was more apt to be the case, because a single shot had met him; whereas had there been a bunch of the braves he must have been riddled with many pellets of lead.

Nothing would have pleased him more than to hover about that same spot and bag the nervy chap who had pulled trigger on him, for Jim was more than ordinarily daring; but the thought of the parents resting in complete ignorance of the terrible danger that hovered over their little frontier home caused him to look at the matter in a different light.

His first duty was to warn them, his next to assist in a hasty flight down the river to the nearest post.

Accordingly, Jim had hardly touched the ground before he rolled over twice, thrashed around a bit as a badly wounded man might, and then gun in hand crawled away.

The dense undergrowth aided in this manoeuvre, and being an experienced woodman he had no difficulty in accomplishing the feat in an almost noiseless manner.

Indeed, what trifling sounds might have accompanied his crawl were certainly overwhelmed in the

gusts of wind that fortunately at this moment swept through the trees.

Still Jim's heart was filled with a fierce anger in that he had been made the target of a red scoundrel's gun, and when he had gone about thirty paces he could not resist the temptation to pause, select a good point for an observation, and then carefully raise his head inch by inch until he could cover the spot of his recent adventure, with his keen eyes.

And as he looked he saw a feathered head slowly push above some bushes just beyond, and immediately caught sight of the painted face of a hideous half breed who was advancing cautiously toward where he supposed his victim lay.

His whole attitude was that of a cruel tiger creeping up on its intended quarry, and as the light fell upon his face Jim saw that it was painted for war.

At the sight a fury filled the heart of the young Canadian pioneer.

How did he know but what ere now the parents whom he loved had fallen victims under the hatchets of the allies, and that this very scoundrel may have been one of those engaged in the terrible crime?

Knowing that Jim had gone to the trading post he may have even started out with the intention of intercepting the young man.

That settled it.

After that thought had found lodgment in his brain nothing in the line of danger to himself could have kept Jim Calgarry from visiting justice upon this would-be murderer.

The unprovoked attack upon himself was sufficient provocation alone.

He moved his rifle but a trifle, for he had kept it rained upon the spot where he anticipated seeing the other appear.

When his finger pressed the trigger there was a crack, a shout of terror, and the painted half breed prang into the air as though propelled by a spring.

When he fell to earth there was that in the dull crash to signify better than words could have done that this shot of the young borderer had accomplished its work well.

Jim did not linger to find out whether the victim of his shot had comrades or not.

His rifle was of the old pattern, and capable of sending but a single shot, although he also carried a revolver upon his person, a habit that perhaps had been brought about through having a brother in the mounted police.

Jim did not dare go back for his boat.

The danger would be too great, since he must expose himself to the gaze of any concealed enemy, who could easily puncture him with a bullet.

The craft must be abandoned, and his further journey accomplished on land.

Fortunately they had a second bull boat at home, a safer one than that which he was thus forced to abandon.

None knew the adjacent country better than this young fellow, since he had set his traps far and near for many seasons, and carried bales of fine pelts down to the post of the Hudson Bay Company.

By taking a short cut across country he could hope to reach home in a few hours.

And what was better it would take him in the

vicinity of the Arnold home, where he might have an opportunity of warning their nearest neighbors.

Bessie Arnold was an attraction that had brought Jim over the trail many times; and his heart was sore with anxiety almost as much on her account as for his parents as he contemplated the results of an Indian attack.

He found some reason to believe that the villain who had tried to shoot him down was alone; for had there been others in the near vicinity surely they must have given vent to their rage in savage shouts when his death cry rang out.

Taking advantage of the first opportunity to reload his faithful rifle, Jim ran on.

Long association with the red trappers who brought furs into the isolated trading posts of the great company had taught him many of their ways.

Thus he ran after a fashion which, while it carried him over much ground in the course of an hour, was not apt to tire him.

So the Indians were able to keep up this jog trot all day and night, covering many miles, and showing the persistence of the unwearied wolf.

All the while he was keeping his eyes and ears on the alert for signs of the rebellious reds, who might be anywhere, now that they had thrown their fortunes in with that of the desperate leader, Louis Riel, and were bent on devastating the whole Northwest ere the Canadian government could rush troops to the scene.

This unprovoked attack told him that it was war to the knife between the whites and their hereditary foes, and that he had a right to shoot on sight.

More than an hour and a half had elapsed since his

little adventure when Jim detected signs ahead that warned him he was not alone in the vast timber belt stretching north of the Saskatchewan border.

He felt positive he had caught a glimpse of something glistening in the sunlight, something that could only be a steel object reflecting the rays of the heavenly orb; and realizing what this meant to him he immediately dropped out of sight among the bushes.

Then came before his sight a spectacle that chilled his very blood, and made him quiver with suspense as he crouched there staring through the little opening.

CHAPTER II.

JIM TO THE RESCUE.

Stalking through the forest aisles came a bevy of painted savages, bearing all manner of spoils that would indicate the fact of their having started raiding the cabins of the hardy settlers.

And in their midst walked a young girl whom Jim recognized as Bessie Arnold.

She was as pale as death, and apparently almost ready to drop with fright, after witnessing the terrible scenes that must have accompanied the destruction of her home, and possibly the death of those she loved.

Jim gritted his teeth with rage as he glared at the passing group, and twice he half raised his gun as if the inclination to shoot was strong within him; but prudence held his hand.

There were a full dozen of the raiders, and if he

once disclosed his presence the end must be his death as well as settling the girl's sad fate.

Jim was possessed of considerable cunning, as must all men be who pit their skill against the sharp little animals of the woods and streams, in their daily labor.

He saw that if he could possess his soul in patience and wait a few hours he might find a chance to rescue the girl.

So he crouched still closer to the earth, and held his very breath in suspense as the band trailed past, the warriors talking volubly and doubtless exulting in the fact that hostilities had actually broken out, and that at last they could pay the whites back for many indignities suffered at their hands in the past.

When the last brave had vanished amid the dense foliage Jim started to follow.

It was a precarious job at the best, for he well knew that these fellows possessed the hearing of the lynx, and that the slightest incautious sound he might happen to make would bring the whole bunch upon him with guns and hatchets only too ready to drink his blood.

Still that thought did not keep him from following, with every faculty on the alert.

Now and then he could catch a faint glimpse of the laggards who hung behind, and at such times his caution would be redoubled.

He forgot all about the cabin on the river bank and the old folks who awaited his coming, all unconscious of the red peril that skulked through the woods; for Jim knew now that he was in love with Bessie Arnold, and his resolution was strong to rescue her from her red captors.

In the tall man who had walked beside the girl he had recognized George Riel, known among the Indians as White Beaver, a cousin of the man who was stirring up all the worst elements among the red men of the wilderness.

This fact explained why Bessie had been taken prisoner when perhaps all others had been slain; for Jim knew that this half breed had visited at the home of the Arnolds many times, until he was kicked off the premises by the indignant father when he had the impudence to propose that the pretty girl be given to him for a wife.

He had waited until time brought its revenge, and had doubtless led the first party of marauders straight for the Arnold home, with the purpose of wiping out his disgrace in blood, and carrying off the girl.

Jim knew full well that the band would not go far.

In the first place the afternoon was partly spent, and then again the captive girl had shown such signs of exhaustion, due to her distress of mind, that she could not possibly go much further.

And there was no need of haste, since the war had just broken out, and much time must elapse ere the troopers could be transported from distant eastern parts to the scene of hostilities.

Meanwhile the region lay at the mercy of these red raiders, led by the fanatical Riel, eager to scourge the whites for wrongs he believed he had suffered at their hands, and with some vast scheme for keeping the Northwestern country for the red man.

Jim made no mistake about believing that the band must soon come to a halt, and settle down for the night.

The wind was in his face, and he caught a whiff of acrid smoke even before he knew that a halt had taken place, proving that a camp fire had been started.

So he redoubled his vigilance and crept closer.

Soon he could look into the camp and watch the events that were happening there.

He saw that Bessie sat upon the ground with her head bowed as though overwhelmed by sad thoughts, and while the eyes of the young scout often roved that way, he was at the same time watching the others.

Some of the raiders lay on the ground upon their blankets; others smoked as they made preparations looking to a night's stay in the spot selected, while a couple who had been designated for the work cooked supper in their primitive way.

This consisted in broiling pieces of meat on the ends of sticks that were thrust into the earth near the blazing fire, and which when cooked would be eagerly devoured by the hungry braves.

Nervously did the fingers of Jim Calgarry play with the trigger of his faithful gun as he watched these things; particularly when the tall half breed sauntered over to the spot where the girl sat, and apparently attempted to talk with her.

She simply shook her head in a mournful way and refused to answer.

White Beaver showed symptoms of anger, for he bent over as if to lay hands on her.

He was nearer to death at that instant than ever before in all his life, for Jim was glancing along the barrel of his rifle, and had the half breed but ventured to seize hold of his captive in his rage, he would have

paid the penalty with his life, for Jim had reached a point where discretion counted for little.

Fortunately the other seemed to think better of his action, for after speaking once more, and shaking a finger threateningly he turned away.

How slowly the minutes crept on.

Jim was on needles and pins with anxiety, for he was fully determined to rescue Bessie Arnold no matter what the cost, and only waited until the hour was more favorable for his plans.

At last the sun set.

The primitive supper of the campers was ready, and every man set himself to work demolishing some of the rudely cooked meat after a fashion that bordered upon the savage ways of the woods panther.

White Beaver picked out a piece and carried it over to the captive, but she looked up and shook her head in the negative, evidently being unable to bear the thought of eating even a bite when her thoughts were so gloomy.

Jim saw that she was now noting things around her, as if some wild hope of being able to escape had taken possession of her soul.

He knew that as the daughter of a settler Bessie was no timid darling, apt to show terror at sight of a speck of blood; why, many a time Jim had hunted alongside of this border girl, and her rifle had vied with his in bringing down game.

Hence, he felt sure that if he could only let her know of his presence in the neighborhood she would be ready to render all the assistance in her power in effecting an escape; but how to do this without arousing the suspicion of the Indians was the question.

He knew he could signal her, for they had a code they used when chance separated them in the timber; but then such a sound when heard in this place might be noted by her captors, and do more harm than good.

So he resolved to take chances, and if the girl's eyes happened to rest on the clump of bushes where he lay he would show his face for an instant.

It was a hazard, but then nothing can be gained without taking some risks.

The chance came sooner than he had even hoped for, and as he had resolved, Jim showed his face above the bushes.

He knew that she must have seen him, though she gave no sign just then, not wishing to attract the attention of the group around the fire.

Fortunately the leading half breed chanced to be haranguing his comrades just at that moment, and Jim believed he had not been observed by any hostile eyes.

He changed his position, however, to make sure, and then waited to see how things would take shape so as to figure on his expected work.

He had already decided on how he could creep up back of the one tepee the Indians had erected, evidently for the use of the prisoner, and his new position had been taken with this idea in view.

It seemed to Jim that the reds would never settle down for the night.

Bessie had gone within the lodge, but ere passing from sight she had made a movement with her hand that the hidden scout understood as a signal to him.

It meant that she looked to him for help; and from

the way in which he gritted his teeth it was not hard to understand that Jim Calgarry was ready to risk his life a dozen times over in her behalf.

Finally the last of the band seemed to have settled down, and knowing that time must count heavily Jim prepared to make his desperate move.

Inch by inch he crawled along back of that lodge, moving so carefully that not a leaf seemed to stir, nor even a twig to be displaced.

The night breeze sighed in the tree tops, the little woods animals played among the leaves, or peeped curiously at the strange creatures that had bivouacked near their haunts; but there was no sign of life in the camp.

Drowsily the fire burned and smouldered as Jim drew momentarily closer; until in the end he found himself just behind the painted tepee in which the girl had taken refuge.

Now came the critical test when he must slit the skin of which the lodge was composed, and let Bessie know of his presence; and it was with his heart in his mouth, so to speak, that he pushed the blade through the taut hide.

CHAPTER III.

THE RESCUE OF THE GIRL.

Knowing that there was apt to be some sound following the insertion of his knife blade in the tough skin of which the tepee was fashioned Jim had waited

until the wind was once more playing a sort of dirge among the upper branches of the trees, and by this means the ripping noise would be swallowed up in the other sounds.

He drew the knife down to the very ground, and thus opened a gap of at least two feet, through which entrance or exit could readily be made.

Then he laid low and waited, but not long.

The girl inside had been looking for just this thing, and was prepared to take advantage of the opportunity.

He quickly saw her head appear in the opening, and made a motion with his hand that signified caution.

One false move would ruin all, and once the sleepers were aroused nothing could be done save to fight the whole band, with the chances ten to one against him.

But Bessie could creep along with just about as much skill as any trailer; her life in the open had taught her these things long ago, and as she came crawling out of the rent in the lodge not by the slightest rustle were her movements such as to cause Jim alarm.

Now she was at his side, and his waiting hand caught the little member she extended so piteously, squeezing it in a reassuring way.

Then they began to move away from the danger zone, side by side, inch by inch, foot by foot, heading for the shelter of the bushes where Jim had found a hiding place while spying upon the camp of his enemies.

They had almost reached this place of security

When Jim heard a guttural sound back in the direction of the fire.

He knew what this meant in all probability, and upon turning his head saw that his worst fears were confirmed, for there at his feet stood one of the red raiders, and his gaze was directly fixed upon the spot where the two fugitives crouched.

There was no other course left to the young frontiersman than to strike, for in another moment the whole camp would be aroused at any rate, and he knew that it was better to have the awakening be accompanied with an alarm that must for the time being cause each brave to think of his own personal safety.

So he instantly whipped his gun around and fired.

No need to look a second time to learn what the result of his shot might be, for at such a short distance there was no such a thing as fail.

Just as he once more turned to the girl Jim had a fleeting glimpse of many dusky figures springing wildly erect, and dodging for the shelter of the adjacent trees, under the impression that the camp had been attacked by a force of whites.

That gave the two escaping ones a few seconds of grace, which they put to the best advantage possible.

A couple of bounds carried them into the shelter of the shadows; but not before a whoop announced that they had been seen, and probably recognized by at least one pair of keen eyes.

Jim halted not to find out what was about to happen; he knew that every yard placed between that camp and himself just then was so much insurance in the line of safety.

So with Bessie clinging to his left arm he started to run, trying to work the mechanism of his gun at the same time, with the idea of slipping another cartridge into the barrel of his breech loader.

That they would be pursued he knew without a doubt, and his only hope was that he might be able to meet these enemies one by one and try conclusions with them.

If the young girl had never known before what valor lay in that true heart of Jim Calgarry the fact must have been made clear to her at this dark hour, when he so willingly risked his life in her behalf.

Jim kept one ear turned so that he might be warned of the near approach of the enemy.

It was not three minutes before he caught the patter of soft footsteps alongside, and knew that one at least of the Indians had overtaken them.

Then he had glimpses of the dark form that leaped with the agility of a panther through the timber, gradually closing in so as to cut off their flight.

Jim was in just the mood for action, and accordingly he launched himself at this daring savage, endeavoring to strike him to the earth with his clubbed rifle; but the fellow apparently had the eyes of a cat for he saw his danger in time to duck, and before Jim could prepare for a second blow a pair of muscular arms had encircled his body, and the gun was knocked from his grasp.

Still he struggled like mad, and strong though that red raider may have been he would have proven a reed in the grasp of the young frontiersman could Jim ever have broken the grip the other had managed to secure.

In the midst of the struggle, while the two combatants were threshing back and forth like twin gladiators, something came down on the top of the Indian's feathered head with a tremendous thump, and caused him to measure his length on the ground, where he lay senseless or worse.

Jim could not keep from uttering an exclamation of joy, for it had been Bessie who had seized upon his rifle, and her arms that brought the same down upon the enemy's cranium.

Of such material have the girls of the border always been made; and along the frontier of the Great Northwest they proved to be no exception to their sisters further south.

There was no time for even a word.

Others of the Indians must be near, and would be very likely to hear something of the fierce scuffle, so that they were apt to drop in on them at any moment.

But Jim knew that running was simply betraying their location to those keen ears; and that if they hoped to escape they must now proceed with such infinite caution that no one would be able to say exactly where the two fugitives might be found.

Accordingly he and Bessie now stole silently through the timber, heading in such a way as to avoid a return to the dangerous neighborhood of the fire and camp.

Doubtless the other reds were scouring the whole vicinity in search of them, and White Beaver would be furious at losing his prize.

For some time they must keep on the alert, anticipating a meeting with some of these prowlers.

But as the minutes crept on and they were putting

considerable distance between themselves and the scene of the escape even cautious Jim began to believe they had given the redskins the slip.

He was devoured with curiosity to know how Bessie came to be in the power of the allies, and his first question was to ask her to explain.

After all it was little that the girl knew; she had been captured while gathering flowers in the timber and kept a prisoner while the band went off toward her home.

Later she heard shots in that direction, and smoke clouds told of the destruction of the cabin.

Then came the braves laden with spoils, and apparently wild with delight over having struck the first blow in the new war that was to sweep like a tornado of fire along the border.

She knew not what fate had overtaken those she loved, but feared the worst.

Jim could only endeavor to comfort her, and their own peril was so great that it was unwise to waste much time in exchanging confidences.

The girl knew that she now had a protector who would lay down his life before allowing that terrible half breed to regain possession of her.

Once more they set out, bending their course so that they might after a while reach the home of Jim.

He felt that the chances were the savage foe had already been there and accomplished his dreadful work; yet must he know to a certainty the worst.

Could it be possible that these two were the sole survivors of both families, waifs in the wilderness?

Jim tried to keep the girl's courage up, and would

not even allow himself to believe that the worst could have happened.

If the red rovers were searching still for signs of the fugitives in the woods they gave no token of their presence; but trailing dogs are always more to be feared when they fail to give tongue.

Now they were approaching the river where Jim's happy home lay, and his heart grew cold with apprehension as he contemplated what new horror his eyes might be compelled to presently witness; and his lips pressed tightly together as he registered a vow that if the red fiends had been here during his absence and taken the lives of those dear to him he would never rest at ease until every one of those concerned in the tragedy had expiated his crime.

He even sniffed the air suspiciously as he advanced filled with the fear that he would scent the smoke that must tell the dreadful story of a devastated home.

It was in this anxious state of mind that Jim Callaway drew near the clearing and the clump of trees that marked the spot where he had left his parents three days previous.

Then his heart suddenly seemed filled with thanksgiving, for his eager eyes discovered the familiar outlines of the cabin, showing that as yet the torch of the destroyers had not reached this peaceful nook on the river bank.

And Bessie breathed words of joy in his ear, for he had greatly feared lest Jim too would find himself bereft of all his relatives by this mad uprising on the part of the Indians and half breeds of the Northwest. Another minute and they were knocking at the

door of the forest cabin, fearful lest it might after all prove a delusion, and that once the door were opened it would be only to disclose the fact that the log cabin were occupied by treacherous foes, who sought by this clever stratagem to coax other victims into the net.

But when Jim heard his father's voice calling out to ask who demanded admittance, his heart beat joyfully, and he made haste to answer.

In another moment the door had opened, and the two fugitives of the forest were received by a wondering couple.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BULL BOAT ON THE RIVER.

One hour later and the cabin was left in silence, for the large boat made of the hides of animals had carried four people away in the darkness of the night.

A passing trapper had brought warning to the home of Jim's parents, so that they had made immediate preparations for flight, and after the coming of the young man there was little to be done.

Knowing that the danger increased with every passing hour, they did not delay their departure after all was pronounced ready.

It was a sorrowful group that quitted the dear home on the river bank; for years of association had made it seem precious in their eyes; but their lives were worth more than mere worldly belongings, and hence they had to consider personal safety first of all.

Before they had drifted a mile down the river Jim, who had just taken up a paddle to urge the craft on with more speed, saw a flash of flame from the region which they had so recently deserted.

Suspecting what it meant he yet refrained from calling the attention of the others to the spot, but dipping his paddle in deeply strove to encourage the boat to renewed speed.

Two minutes later he heard Bessie give a low cry, and knew that she too had made a discovery.

By this time there could be no hiding the fact, for as all turned their eyes backward they saw a light appearing above the trees, and soon tongues of flame shot upward.

"The fiends have fired the cabin!" exclaimed Mr. Calgarry; and his wife began to softly weep.

"But thank Heaven they arrived too late to find you in ignorance of the threatening fate that hangs over the head of all settlers in this region," declared Jim, earnestly.

"Yes, you are right, son. Another home we can build, but our lives once gone could never be recalled. We should not weep, wife, save with gratitude for the wonderful thing that has saved us this night," said the old man, anxious to look at the bright side.

They knew the Indians would be able to tell that they had not been gone from the cabin many hours, and it was ten chances to one that the flight would carry them down the great river below, so that if pursuit were made they could expect to see boats containing their red foes before a great while.

Perhaps the allies might be satisfied to loot and

burn the cabin, their taste for blood not being as yet fully aroused.

Long did Jim ply the paddle.

He entirely forgot that he had been fatigued at the time he went ashore to cook his dinner; for the excitement of the hour seemed to lend him new strength and vigor.

It was a lonely journey in the gloom of night.

No one could say how many deadly enemies might be lurking in the gloomy timber that stood up on the banks of the Saskatchewan, which they had struck shortly after seeing that flare of fire in their wake; and while they tried to refrain from making any sound above a whisper, it was always possible that keen ears, accustomed to noting even the faintest flutter out of the common, might catch the dip of the spruce blade in the water, or hear the drops as they dripped from the paddle when in mid air.

Suspense ruled the hour.

Always did Jim keep that faithful old rifle of his within reach of his ready hand.

Twice it had done him good service on this fateful night—twice did he say, when in the hands of brave-hearted Bessie the same weapon had been brought down upon the feather decked head of the warrior with whom he struggled in the wood—and he seemed to feel that ere peace again dwelt in this land of the pine and the timber wolf that gun would likely sound the death knell of more than one more prowling, paint-bedaubed Indian.

The elder Calgary was by no means shorn of his powers by age, and could stem the swift current of the Saskatchewan with the best French-Canadian

voyageur ever sent out by the Great Company to collect furs.

He only waited to "spell" Jim when the latter signified he was "all in," and would be glad of a chance to rest.

Bessie lay in the bottom of the boat amid various goods which the housewife yearned to save from the destruction of her home, her pretty head in the lap of Jim's mother, whom she expected some day to call her own.

Although talking was frowned upon while they thus voyaged down the stream where danger sat upon the shores, and death held high carnival wherever a settler's cabin lurked, the kind hearted woman soothed the stricken girl by the gentle motion of her hand upon her head.

And with such warm friends near by, and a lover in whom she could place such reliance, Bessie found that she still had cause for feeling thankful.

After her recent frightful experience as a captive in the hands of that fiend White Beaver, she looked upon her present situation as a great blessing; and her eyes often rested with deepest affection upon the stalwart figure of the paddler as he moved slightly back and forth in sending his blade deep below the surface of the river.

Suddenly Jim ceased laboring, and appeared to bend forward as if to view something that had attracted his attention on the river below.

Everyone immediately seemed to be aroused, even the girl sitting up.

"Oh what is it?" asked Jim's mother, in a trembling whisper.

"I saw something that looked like a flash of fire down the river; something that seemed to be moving over the surface. I think we had better put in here and investigate," was the quick reply Jim made.

He had seen more, though he did not say it just then, not wishing to alarm the others more than was absolutely necessary; for as the light flashed up his eyes, accustomed to seeing long distances, had caught the unmistakable outlines of an Indian, who seemed to be leaning from a boat and paddling with his hands.

The distance was too great to fancy that the hostiles could have heard anything that would make him believe the fugitives were coming down upon him; but Jim had his own ideas as to what it meant.

He believed that some of the very allies who had fired his home, and perhaps that of Bessie, had managed to gain a point below them by taking a short cut across the tongue of land, and that they were now engaged in setting some sort of fiendish trap upon the river by means of which the whites would fall into their hands.

Perhaps they had stretched a rope across the stream in a narrow place, against which the drifting boat would be apt to bring up, and confusion reign long enough to allow of a successful attack.

Jim had never known of such a thing happening; but then the Indians had never been on the warpath since his coming to the region with his parents.

Such crafty foes were equal to anything that savored of strategy; and the sight of that single red-skin was sufficient to warn him of what he might expect.

As they had kept well out in the current so as to avoid all chance of being seen from the shores it required considerable exertion on his part now to send the bull boat to land.

Reaching the shore they found that the trees and bushes came down to the very water's edge, affording a splendid hiding place if so be it was considered advisable to remain there any length of time.

But the main object of Jim Calgarry was to investigate the cause of that light upon the water, and find whether it were possible for them to slip past without being detected by their foes who must be on the watch.

He immediately whispered a few directions and left them, though the hand of the girl reached out and pressed his ere he quitted the boat; it was as if she begged him in this mute way to be very careful, since he was now all she had in the world.

Jim soon made his way down the river to a point opposite the spot where he had caught sight of the strange flash of a torch which was almost immediately extinguished.

He speedily discovered that there was indeed something going on in this quarter, for dark figures were moving close to the waters' edge, and he could hear the low voices of men in conversation.

So far as Jim could determine in the darkness they seemed to be setting some sort of trap whereby the fugitives would be caught should they run into it unwittingly; what it could be he knew not, save that they were anchoring several boats out in the stream in order to cover the wide stretch of water, and not let those they sought slip past.

At first he despaired of outwitting these wily ones, and even began to figure how best they could flee through the timber, with many hardships before them ere they could hope to reach a place of safety; then as he realized how valuable to their comfort the boat really was, he began to figure on how it might be taken past the line of videttes without their being the wiser.

It was a case of white cunning against Indian strategy.

Jim quickly retraced his steps to the spot where he had left his little party of anxious ones.

He found all quiet and eager to hear his report; but after he told what awaited them below gloom settled upon the little band.

Not so Jim, who had conceived a novel scheme for outwitting the waiting allies, and asked his father's assistance in putting it into execution; and when the elder Calgarry heard what it was he expressed his opinion that it carried more than a fair chance for success.

The sight of the great shell of a tree close by had given Jim his idea; he believed that it could be easily separated into two pieces, and that these could be so bound about the bull boat that in the semi-gloom it would be considered only an immense floating log, and little attention paid to it by the Indian watchers.

At any rate their case was desperate enough to try any halfway reasonable measure that promised a possibility of success.

CHAPTER V.

THE MOCKERY OF THE HOLLOW LOG.

Fortunately there was no lack of rope in their possession, and with the assistance of his father Jim found the shoeing of the boat could be accomplished without great difficulty.

He had frequently done this thing before now, to protect the vitals of a boat from the stones when low water forced its being dragged along the half dry channel of some stream; but this was the first occasion where he thought to cover the upper works with heavy bark.

Once the task was completed and the boat gently shoved into the water, Jim took one last look at his handiwork and then, with a grunt of satisfaction crawled in through the opening at the stern left for him; after which he moved the paddle back and forth noiselessly after a fashion of sculling, which action caused the boat to move out from the shore.

The two women lay in the bottom of the boat, their hearts beating faster than their wont as the seconds passed and all the while they knew they were bearing down upon that line of sentinel boats stretched across the river, each one of which contained a keen-eyed Cree, or, mayhap a villainous half breed, constantly on the watch for anything in the shape of a canoe, but caring naught for a mere floating log.

Should some untoward accident cause the clever trick to be exposed Jim in the stern and his father at the bow had guns ready for hot work; and these red allies would never accomplish their evil work with-

out a desperate resistance on the part of the defenders of the two women.

When he had succeeded in bringing the craft some little distance away from the bank Jim withdrew his paddle lest the gleam of the starlight on its wet and shiny surface be the means of their undoing.

Then rifle in hand he awaited the issue.

It could not be long in coming, for they must have been close upon the line of videttes at the time he concluded that it was taking too great a risk to continue his paddle.

Over in the eastern sky there was a glow that might have given rise to the suspicion that another poor settler's home was in flames; but Jim knew that it meant the rising of the moon.

Whether this would prove a misfortune or otherwise for them could not as yet be told; but for one he felt pleased because they were able to try this daring experiment before the darkness was wholly dispelled.

The log was behaving admirably, and thus far seemed disposed to float along with the ends up and down stream; this was as Jim wanted it, since there might be danger of the trick being exposed should it swing around and give the watchers a chance to see the hollow nature of the supposed tree trunk.

Jim could peer out of his hole and see something of what was going on.

Hence, he was enabled to discover a figure standing up in some sort of boat about twenty feet away and from his actions apparently engaged in scanning the surface of the water.

Occasionally the Indian would drop on his knee and with a hand above his eyes to shut out the starlight try and make out if anything were moving with the current.

Jim saw him give a start, and from his eager actions it became apparent that the vidette had discovered the dense object sweeping past his station.

If he shouted an alarm all would be confusion, and it seemed probable that the attempt to steal past would result in a desperate battle there upon the river.

No wonder Jim held his breath as he waited to ascertain what the fellow in the anchored boat would do.

The Indian was trying to make out the character of the object he could see moving along with the current, and his manner seemed to indicate that he was on the point of giving the alarm.

And just then, as though kind Heaven took pity on the fugitives of the timber, the moon peaked out from behind a cloud that had obstructed her rising flood of light, and revealed to the warrior that what he had deemed a suspicious object was but a floating log.

Jim heard him give a grunt of disgust, and chuckled as his fingers ceased to play nervously with the lock of his gun; for it seemed that the danger might be past.

Thanks to the deceptive quality of the moonlight even the sharp eyes of the wide-awake red vidette had failed to fathom the shrewd trick played by a white man.

But there is such a thing as shouting before one is out of the woods, and Jim counted without his host when he calculated that they had safely passed

through the gantlet of boats upon the surface of the Saskatchewan.

Some object came against the side of the rotten tree trunk with such force that it smashed a hole in the weak covering.

The act was accompanied by a startled exclamation that told of surprise, and Jim knew that another warrior, who it happened was closer to their course down the current, had out of curiosity, whanged his paddle against the supposed log, only to have it split the whole side.

After that secrecy was no longer possible.

Jim had already arranged in his mind what his action must be in such a crisis, and he was ready to carry it out without a second's loss of time.

Quickly his sharp knife sought the opening above, and severed the rope that had held the two sections of bark in place above the bull boat.

They fell away, one on either side, to the evident amazement of the Cree brave who was standing there, paddle in hand, as though turned into stone by the strange consequences of that idle stroke of his ashens blade.

Jim immediately snatched out his revolver and fired at the meddlesome mischief-maker, his heart filled with anger at the poor success of his scheme at a time when it had promised such rich returns.

Then picking up his paddle he bent to the task of sending the bull boat down stream with as much speed as lay in his muscles.

All around arose yells of anger, as the watchers began to realize that in some clever manner, which they could not yet understand, the fugitives had suc-

ded in slipping up on them unseen, and were now in danger of showing them a clean pair of heels, so to speak.

Jim worked like a prize-winner, and the heavily laden boat slipped through the water with gradually increasing momentum; but now they found that the household goods the anxious mother and wife had hoped to save were holding them back, while the Indians in their lighter boats could go three yards to their two.

However, there was another word to say about this thing and when Mr. Calgarry let loose with his rifle those in the rear found they did not have the snap they had believed.

Doubtless Jim, being the better marksman, having taken many a prize at the turkey shoots in the fall, could have done better execution, had he been given the chance; but as it happened his duty lay with the paddle just then, and he had shoved his gun along to the little heroine sitting in the bottom of the boat.

Under ordinary circumstances Bessie would have hesitated long before venturing to aim and fire a rifle at a human being; but what had happened that night gave her courage for anything that bordered on desperation.

When she fired the first time and Jim, who was watching closely, saw the fellow paddling in the bow of a boat that held several of the redskins fall backward upon his companions, creating the utmost confusion, he could not keep from giving vent to a shout of approval, and doubtless the love in his heart received an impetus that it had never known before.

She held out her hand for cartridges, and with great

deliberation shoved one in the barrel of the gun, just as the elder Calgarry bowled over another new paddler who had ventured too near their craft.

By this time they had the remaining reds pan-stricken, and some of them headed for the shore, possibly meaning to do some shooting on their own account once they reached firm ground.

Jim immediately headed the boat toward the other bank, believing it good policy to keep the river between these vicious would-be sharpshooters and themselves.

The moon was now doing a friendly act, and Jim felt that some merciful power must be interposing in their behalf; for had darkness reigned while the Indians were advancing some of them might have been able to come so close that they could have upset all the plans of himself and friends.

As it was they had clear sailing for a short time at least; though doubtless these persistent chaps would make more trouble for them below.

What would become of them if this sort of running fight kept up long Jim did not like to contemplate; for he knew that their supply of ammunition must give out, and that there was always a grim chance that some random bullet, or the knife of a venture-some brave swimming under cover of some floating bit of bark on the flood, would end the career of himself or his father, perhaps both, when the two women would be left helpless to fall into the hands of the red fiends.

So while he kept up a brave front for the sake of those he loved, Jim was secretly heavy of heart, and

in vain racked his brain in the endeavor to conceive some scheme by which they could profit.

Undoubtedly those in boats were keeping up the pursuit, though unseen by the fugitives; while others on shore would be running down the river bank with some deep object in view.

Though he had already gone through such adventures as fall to few men, and all within a comparatively few hours, Jim was just as full of grit as ever; for his seemed to be one of those rare natures that refuses to yield until the last breath has left the body.

He closed his teeth hard and continued to paddle away as though perfectly fresh, even though each effort gave his tired muscles a severe wrench, and only through the greatest of efforts was he able to repress a groan.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COMING OF THE MOUNTED POLICE.

It was not long before they learned that the Indians were still on the job, and evidently far from willing to confess themselves defeated.

Bessie it was who discovered the canoes following, and hardly had she spoken than there was a spiteful crack of a gun from the shore, followed by the splash of a bullet a few feet away from the side of the bull boat.

Here was an enemy against whom those in the speeding craft were really powerless, for they could not even see the runners, who might keep up the bom-

bardment as fast as they could reload until by accident they succeeded in accomplishing their work.

All the while the several boats containing the balance of the red foe would come trailing in the rear, ready to pounce down upon the scene at the critical moment.

No wonder Jim felt desperate.

The thought of those he loved being subject to this exasperating fire while he seemed impotent to stop it was making him savage.

He even contemplated going ashore and grappling with the crafty foe on his chosen ground; but though this in one sense might give him personal satisfaction it would leave the rest unguarded.

Jim's father had taken note of the fact that the other was overtaxing his powers, and he now insisted upon changing places with him for a spell.

So it came that Jim was able to handle his rifle once more, and it was with a grim determination to do deadly work with the weapon that he watched for a chance to fire.

It came soon enough.

Those in the boats, growing impatient for an opportunity to have a hand in the affair, began to increase their speed, and Jim knew a crisis was approaching when he saw that they were much closer as another bend was reached.

He waited until the leading boat appeared in view, and then with a word to his father to refrain from paddling while he aimed, he let the red devils have the benefit of his skill.

There was some confusion in that boat of the

enemy following his shot, and it could be seen that Jim had certainly not wasted his lead.

Still, the Indians had evidently made up their minds to close accounts then and there, for they continued to push forward with desperate haste, regardless of the fact that this terrible marksman had handed his rifle to Bessie so that she could reload, while he took up the weapon belonging to the elder Calgary.

This time when he threw it to his shoulder there was an instinctive duck on the part of all the inmates of the several pursuing canoes; for human nature is weak, and even an Indian dislikes affording a target for a man who seems to be a magician with a gun.

While they thus ducked the reds could not very well wield their paddles, and in this way the fugitives were apt to make a gain.

Jim saw that this was a point worth considering, and so he kept threatening their pursuers each time they started work.

By degrees the game became worn threadbare, and then he knew it was up to him to make good; so he sent another leaden pellet on its mission.

There was an involuntary flinch on the part of the reds when the flame burst forth; but for all their bobbing the bullet found a victim.

This was exciting work as far as it went, and up to now it had all been in favor of the whites; but at any moment conditions might change, and none knew this better than the sturdy young Canuck who crouched in the stern of the fleeing bull boat and kept tabs on the pursuers.

Much depended upon what lay before them down the river.

More than once he turned his head to glance over his shoulder, trying to remember what the lay of the land in that quarter might be, and if there were any spots where in the shallows the Indians might wade out and seize upon their boat in passing, so as to bring the fight to close quarters.

That was what he feared most of all.

So long as they could keep the enemy at a distance the difference in numbers was not apt to tell so heavily against them; but once let the battle come to hand-grips and it was all over.

Now and then shots had been coming from the shore, but as yet these had done no harm, though one bullet chipped a splinter from the side of the boat, and yet another drew blood from the arm of Jim's father.

Conditions had not changed to any great extent, but when the fugitive craft, swept around a bend in the stream, there was a regular fusilade on the shore.

To the surprise of Jim he failed to detect any splashing in the water that might indicate where the lead of the Indians was dropping.

There was also something strange in the shouts that reached his ears on the shore; for he seemed able to detect surprise and alarm in the yells of the Indians.

An electrical thrill shot through the young fellow.

"What d'y'e make of that, governor—sounds to me as if the reds had run into an ambush. Those guns have a familiar sound. I've heard them bark before, unless I'm much mistaken. And it was when Charlie and his Mounted Police friends gave us an exhibition of their drill!"

His words gave them all a shock, but it was joy that mingled with the suspense.

Even Mr. Calgarry ceased paddling, and waited to see what would happen when the boats containing the other reds came sweeping around the abrupt bend.

Ashore all had now become silent, as though the little drama was of the past; and this rather strengthened the conviction of Jim that he had guessed truly when he declared it as his belief that friends had been suddenly raised up for them in their sore distress.

Only half a minute elapsed, and then around the bend came the three boats, with the paddlers work-

ing frantically in the endeavor to reach the spot before the battle came to an end; for apparently these fellows in their ignorance of the truth believed that the racket which had reached their ears must have been caused by their comrades overwhelming the fleeing craft from the shore.

They quickly learned of their mistake.

First of all Jim discharged his rifle with a disastrous result—that is to the Indians.

Immediately following this came the roar of half a dozen guns along the shore, and the consequence was consternation in the boats of the red pursuers, where considerable havoc seemed to have resulted from the volley.

Those who were unhurt by the rain of lead immediately jumped overboard and swam lustily for the opposite bank, demoralized by this unexpected demonstration.

Jim could hardly keep from giving vent to a shout of joy; indeed, only lack of breath prevented such an exhibition of his delight.

He knew they were saved.

Immediately the bull boat was headed for the bank, and ere they landed moving forms could be seen amid the brush, and together with the cheery hail of a voice they recognized as Charlie's they caught the unmistakable whinny of horses, proving that Jim's guess must be true, and that these friends who had come to their rescue so opportunely were a detachment of the already famous Mounted Police.

Even at this early day this organization of valiant men had gained a reputation as hard riders and fearless fighters.

Many among them had been cowboys in earlier life, and brought to their new vocation the habits learned on the range.

These men were admirably fitted to carry out the work of keeping peace along the vast stretches of country marking the Great Northwest of Canada.

Up to now their business had only been that of peace officers, making arrests of desperate characters, and patrolling the territory under their jurisdiction; but now with the desperate Louis Riel stirring up the half breeds, together with the Crees and Swampy Sioux to rebellion, they would be apt to see service as soldiers and troopers.

As Jim's mother was helped out of the boat she was caught in the arms of a rugged giant who wore the scarlet jacket that proclaimed him a member of the Mounted Police, and who of course was no other than her second boy, Charlie.

He had five companions with him, and the party had been in camp for several hours, having arrived at this point just as night set in.

They were on the way to Charlie's home, and had intended taking up the journey again at midnight, when their horses had been rested.

Charlie it seemed, upon hearing the rumors of an Indian uprising, had been sore distressed about his parents, and had managed to get permission from the major in command of the troops to take several companions and ride into the woods with the idea of bringing the imperiled ones to a place of safety.

On the way they could warn others, and thus make the expedition seem to be a general one rather than for the particular purpose of saving Charlie's people; the boy was a favorite with his commanding officers, and on this one occasion it paid to have a genial nature.

How fortunately all things had happened.

Jim was overjoyed, and knew that everything now was bound to come out all right.

Still he saw that Bessie did not seem to share in the general rejoicing, and he knew why her heart was sore.

Taking Charlie aside he told him her story, and how the poor girl was unaware whether her parents

had been murdered by the red fiends or were in hiding in the neighborhood of her late home. Perhaps Jim hinted at something of the sort; but the proposition came from Charlie; he suggested that one of his men be detached to accompany the three fugitives down the river and across country to the post, while Jim took his horse and became one of the party in galloping through the timber to the place where Bessie's home had stood, to render what aid they could to those in need of succor.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RIDE THROUGH THE TIMBER.

Jim snapped up this generous offer quickly.

He knew that it was inspired through affection for him, and sympathy for the sweet girl who was at some day in the near future to become his wife.

When the others learned what arrangements had been made Bessie's look thrilled Jim's very heart, it was so full of gratitude; just as though he was not ready to do all that any man dare in behalf of the girl he loved.

Half an hour later they separated, the two women and Mr. Calgarry, accompanied by the best paddler among the fighting men passing down the river in the bull boat, while the half dozen adventurers standing on the bank watched the little craft vanish in the misty moonlight that flooded the surface of the water.

Jim had reason to feel truly grateful that things were so promising, when only a short time before desperation was nerving his arm as he plied the paddle and stifled his groans in order that none might know how weary his young arms were.

The horses being rested those who were left behind did not mean to waste much time.

Doubtless the Indians had received such a check and severe punishment that this band of them at least would give no further trouble; and those who fled down the Saskatchewan in the boat had no need of further anxiety.

Jim was not an accomplished rider, though being a hardy chap he could hold his own fairly well.

He was given the best horse and the easiest managed, Charlie himself mounting a beast that had a temper and needed a strong hand as well as a master to keep him in check.

There was no bugle note to mark their departure, though as a rule these men of the Northwest Mounted Police had been drilled in cavalry tactics, and were capable troopers.

They had rubbed up against the wily red men of the wilderness so much that many lessons had been learned; and chief among these was the fact that generally silence was of more value in dealing with Indians than the pomp and racket marking cavalry movements.

They were out for business rather than display, and so thorough were their methods that already had the crafty reds begun to entertain a healthy respect for the men in the pink jackets who could ride hard, fight hard and endure about all that any Indian dreamed of doing.

None knew these woods so well as Jim.

Long had he tramped them in his trapping expeditions, so that every shortcut was familiar, and he could have traveled through the vast stretch of timber with his eyes blindfolded, so Charlie laughingly declared as they mounted their steeds and started off.

Of course they knew they were taking big chances in thus coursing madly through the woods, with the Indians on the warpath; for it was possible that they might run upon a party of Crees or half breeds heading for some settler's home, and trouble occur; but so anxious was Jim to reach the spot where

Bessie's parents had had their house that for one he was willing to accept chances.

And among the wild spirits that went to make up the rank and file of the Mounted Police in those days as now, he found kindred souls, delighting in deeds of daring and eager to be in the swim all the time.

Hardly a word was exchanged during the whole of the gallop; for there was little need of saying anything, and dodging the trees as seen in the misleading moonlight consumed all their surplus energy.

Many times Jim fancied he saw something that excited his suspicions; but in all cases it turned out to be merely some little animal fleeing before the advance of the cavalcade, terrified by the unusual spectacle of six horses careering madly through the woods.

Finally they found themselves close to the place which claimed their attention.

Jim smelled again the acrid smoke that foretold the destruction of a house; and when they drew rein beside the still smouldering ruins of the log cabin where he had spent many happy hours with Bessie, his heart was filled with anger toward the fiends who had done this thing.

But that was not what had brought them here.

What had become of the little family, the father, mother and two smaller brothers?

Had they been slaughtered, and would their bodies be discovered in or near the ruins of the destroyed cabin?

Jim was off his horse instantly, and with Charlie he began an immediate search of the vicinity.

A minute later he was horrified to discover the body of Mr. Arnold; and that the man had died fighting desperately for the lives of those dear to him might be understood from the significant fact that he still gripped a broken knife in his rigid hand, and had evidently struck down one of the foe with his last atom of strength.

That was all.

Search as they would they could not discover even the faintest trace of other bodies.

Jim began to hope that possibly the rest had escaped; but Charlie suggested that perhaps for some reason the Indians might have taken them away as prisoners, though it hardly seemed in line with the merciless tactics of the red monsters.

The best tracker in the detachment was put to work in the endeavor to learn the truth.

He was a grizzled old ranger who had spent many years among the Indians on the plains, and was thoroughly conversant with all their tricky ways.

Later on McDonald had also been a factor with the Great Company, and in charge of a post where furs were gathered, until a dispute with a commissioner had led to his throwing up the job and joining the troop of Mounted Police, where he was apt to find work congenial to his disposition.

When he got down upon the job it was not long before he had it figured out.

"Woman an' one boy taken off with the pesky reds; other boy escaped, and may be hiding around here now," was the terse way in which he put it.

"What Black McDonald says is the truth; he never makes a miss," declared Charlie to his brother.

"Then our duty is plain; at least mine is, and that means the mother and brother of my Bessie must be snatched from the hands of those devils," said Jim, solemnly; for he felt that he could never look his promised wife in the eyes again unless he had done everything possible to save those dear to her.

Already two of the men were digging a grave in which to place the body of the murdered settler; the savage foe had as usual scalped the victim of their unbridled passions.

"Don't think we would let you go alone, Jim. Every man in the detachment is wild to get in touch with these red fiends, and give them a lesson they are apt to remember for some time. Do you think the

boy who escaped, if he is in hiding, would recognize your voice if you called?" observed the sergeant, for that was the position Charlie held in the troop of fighters.

"I would like to try, if you think it is not too dangerous," remarked Jim; who had a brotherly affection for the young chaps, Archie and Robert.

"Hang the danger—it is what we live on, man. Give a toot and see if you can get a rise," exclaimed the other.

Accordingly Jim shouted the names of the two boys, and coupled his own with them, in the hope that if so be his voice reached the ears of the lad in hiding he would find courage to come out and join them.

It seemed that both Black McDonald and Charlie were correct in their predictions, for sure enough, before Jim had repeated his shout twice a small figure came running from the woods toward them, waving a gun.

This proved to be Archie Arnold.

His story was just what they had figured from what the old scout had said; his mother and Robert had been carried off by the Indians, and the only reason he knew why they had been spared was that once the settler's wife had been very good to a sick Cree who would have died only for her medicines and care—this chap was among those who had attacked the cabin, and after the death of Mr. Arnold he refused to allow his followers, for he turned out to be a chief, to hatchet the others.

The boy was pleased to hear that Bessie had been saved, and was then on her way to safety.

He vowed he would not be left behind when the men of the Mounted Police rode forward to try and effect the rescue of his mother and brother; and Charlie, while hardly in favor of taking such a strippling into danger, could not see that it was any worse than leaving him alone in the woods that were swarming with hostiles.

Archie was not over fifteen but he had the making of a man; and when his father was placed in the grave prepared for him the lad did not shed a tear.

Jim knew what was in his boyish heart, and could read the resolution that marked his set face.

Archie declared that he had shot down two Indians at the time the raid was made, and before this expedition had arrived at its conclusion he meant to be responsible for still others, as some poor recompense for the death of the one beloved.

And so as there was now nothing to keep them at the ruins of the late cabin Charlie gave the word, and they mounted, the boy having a seat on the withers of his own horse, which Jim now bestrode.

Every man had looked to his weapons, and there was a grim, tense expression on all their faces that told what lay in their minds.

McDonald was given the task of keeping the trail, and so confident did the sergeant feel in his ability to accomplish things that he already began to figure what they should do when the enemy was overhauled.

Only a veteran in the art of tracking could follow even the marks left by a large party through the woods, especially in the moonlight; but McDonald could read signs as a student might the page of a book, and a dozen things constantly told him he was on the right course.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE TRAIL.

When the Indians who had committed this dastardly deed quitted the ruins of the settler's home they could not resist the temptation to take with them much of the booty that had escaped the flames.

Those of the party who later on came across Bessie in the woods had garments with them which she had recognized as belonging to her home; but the main body of marauders were not satisfied with such small things but must needs even drive away the cow, doubtless meaning to later on slaughter the tame animal for food.

This was the one thing that spelled trouble for them, as it happened, for the slow progress made by the domestic animal hampered their retreat, so that the force of mounted men, though coming along the trail hours later would not have much difficulty in overtaking them.

Charlie knew that they must proceed with a certain amount of caution.

The Indian character is essentially savage, and rather than allow prisoners to be taken from them these bloody wretches would not hesitate to tomahawk the woman and boy if they believed they were about to be rescued.

Hence, it was very desirable that the pursuers should know when they were getting close to those they hunted, so that they might become more cautious.

Trust that old fox McDonald for that.

He was able to tell just how far ahead the enemy might be at any moment, from the "warmth" as he called it, of the trail.

Even Jim, experienced woodsman as he was, found difficulty at times in discovering traces of the passage of those they followed; and yet the man with the wonderful vision and unbounded knowledge simply bent over in his saddle and traced the course of the trail with unerring precision.

This was rendered possible only because the Indians seemed for some reason to have avoided the denser growth of timber in their retreat, and kept to the open woods.

One thing was in the favor of those grim human

bloodhounds who came so persistently along the forest paths, following the tracker in single file, and with guns across their knees ready for instant use; the Indians knew of no reason for haste since there did not seem to be any organized force within hundreds of miles capable of giving pursuit and bringing them to book for the late outrage.

Consequently they took matters easy, and would very likely go into camp not a great many miles away.

So McDonald declared, and he ought to know.

After the six horsemen had been moving in this manner for more than an hour the man in the lead threw up his hand suddenly.

This was the recognized signal to call a halt.

Apparently McDonald had made a discovery of some sort, or else wished for a consultation.

Jim and the rest immediately clustered around the veteran, eager to know what was in the wind.

"Take a squint over yon, an' tell me what you see, sergeant," said the late factor and as he spoke he pointed ahead through the open woods.

"A fire, by thunder!" exclaimed Charlie, and every man set his teeth hard, knowing that the critical time must now be close at hand when they would see action.

"The pesky varments have gone into camp, and it lies with us what we do to wipe 'em off the earth," continued Black McDonald, who had little cause to love the Indians for some said he had once lost a wife at the hands of the Sioux down across the border, and which accounted for the bitterness that filled his soul whenever the red men came across his path.

"First of all we had better dismount here. To take our horses closer might be risky, when a single neigh would betray us, and spoil all our plans."

From what Charlie said Jim knew then that a dash was not contemplated; for he had talked this all over and understood just why it could not be contemplated while those two prisoners were still in the hands of

the unscrupulous reds, so that he was not surprised when the order came to temporarily abandon the steeds.

They could do much more effective work in meeting their foes after the fashion of the Indian; it was like fighting fire with fire.

Caution must be their watchword now, and a further approach toward the fire of the foe be made figuratively on their hands and knees.

Jim had already experienced something of the same work on this strenuous night, when he crept into the camp of the Indians and slitting the skin of the tepee in which Bessie had been confined, wrought her escape; and now it began to look as though history was about to repeat itself.

This time though he could take solid comfort in the fact that he was no longer alone in the adventure, but had five husky members of the dashing Mounted Police at his back, just wild for trouble.

They marked the spot where the horses were tied so that it could be found again; and at first it had been the intention of the sergeant to leave Archie there with the animals; but the boy pleaded so earnestly to be allowed to share in the work of rescue, that he finally gave in; at least his gun would add one more to the volley of shots they intended sooner or later pouring in upon the red campers, when the conditions seemed ripe.

Like seven shadowy ghosts they trailed along, stooping low, and showing no desire to make haste.

Each man gripped his faithful gun in his hand, and had his pistol ready for instant work.

The sergeant led, for there was no longer especial need of McDonald in the van, and it was a matter of pride that urged Charlie to take that position now.

As they advanced the gleam of the fire could be seen more clearly, though it soon became evident that the Indians were not keeping the blaze up.

Jim wondered whether they could have abandoned

the camp and gone on; or having sought rest in sleep paid little attention to the fire.

One of these must be the truth, and he hoped it would not prove to be the former, since in that case the band of pursuers would have all their work cut out for them again.

And presently he knew that all was well, for as he looked he saw a figure pass between his eyes and the flickering fire, as though some sleeper being aroused had taken it upon himself to change his position, or possibly throw more fuel on the dying blaze.

There was need of great caution.

While the reds might not dream of any peril overhanging them it was a part of their education to always be suspicious, and never lie down to sleep without taking certain precautions.

Of course there would be at least one sentry.

McDonald would take care of him all right, and thank them for the opportunity thus offered.

Then the prisoners could be looked after, and if success rewarded their efforts in this particular they might treat the slumbering band of marauding rebels to the surprise of their lives, such as the Turk received when he "awoke 'mid flame and battle-smoke" to find that the Greek had come.

All this was easily arranged, but it might be found a bit more difficult of fulfillment, for there were a dozen things apt to come in the way, which could hardly be guarded against.

The closer they drew the more cautious were their movements, for it was now an object with them to discover just where the sentry might be found.

Here again the superior knowledge of Black McDonald was successful in locating the man on guard; for his judgment told him just where he himself would have been apt to take up his station had he been entrusted with the task of watching over this same encampment.

He immediately pinched the arm of the man next

to him, as the signal agreed upon, and in this manner the news was communicated along the entire line.

Already it was understood what the next move would be, so that every man immediately flattened himself out upon the ground back of the bushes, and awaited the return of the veteran scout; for without asking further instructions McDonald had silently crept away.

Jim lay where he could observe what went on.

He had already located the exact spot where the two captives had been fastened to trees so that they would be secure while the band was lost in slumber; and to his great satisfaction the place was near where he and his gallant friends crouched.

This would be a valuable point when it came to attempting a rescue.

Jim could also see where the sentry sat with his back against a tree.

The man may have been a half breed; Jim was inclined to believe this must be the case, for he was smoking a pipe, and an Indian would not be apt to do this while on duty.

Well, Jim felt that he had reason to feel sorry for the poor devil, who little suspected in what shape death was creeping upon him.

Now Jim bent his energies to the task of trying to discover McDonald's approach; and though he was fully on the alert and aware of what was about to happen he had great difficulty in separating the flattened figure of the old Indian fighter from the shadows that lay along the ground just back of the sentry.

But by watching closely he saw a slight movement among those same shadows, and knew that the avenger was nearing his intended victim.

He fairly held his breath when he saw McDonald rise to his knees exactly behind the tree against which the guardian of the slumbering camp sat, for

it became evident that something was about to happen in another minute.

And it did.

Jim knew not how the thing was done, but he saw the figure of the sentry suddenly drop backward as if drawn by an invisible yet powerful hand, and fancied he could catch a dull thud—that was all.

CHAPTER IX.

LIKE A FRINGE OF WOLVES AROUND A CAMP-FIRE.

Quickly Jim glanced around the camp.

He could see the Indians sprawled out here and there, some sleeping with their heads on their arms, others lying on their backs or stomachs; and it meant much to the success or failure of their plans whether any of the sleepers stirred now, and becoming suspicious started an investigation.

But all seemed still.

Jim breathed easy again.

He saw that the first step in looking to the rescue of the two prisoners had been taken, and success loomed up as the reward of McDonald's effort.

The rest might be hard, but it could not offer greater difficulties than the one that had just been surmounted.

He continued to watch, believing that the veteran would not be satisfied with what he had done, but aspire to accomplish the next step on the programme as arranged beforehand.

This would mean sneaking into the camp while the inmates slumbered, and cutting the prisoners loose from the trees to which they were fastened.

In itself this was not so very difficult; indeed, Jim had done something even more venturesome when he

took Bessie out of the tepee with the Indians all about.

He remembered vividly what had followed when he was discovered; would the same apply in this case, and a battle be on before Mrs. Arnold and Robert had been rescued?

Shifting his attention to the neighborhood of the two trees, where the prisoners' forms could be seen, he watched for results.

A hand gripped his leg, and another signal was given, to the effect that the sergeant now ordered them to move toward the left, following his example as he crawled along like some enormous snake, and quite as silently.

Jim understood what the meaning of this must be; for each foot that they covered brought them closer to the wretched captives; Charlie knew that the nearer they could get the more the safety of those in peril would be insured when the escape was effected.

He had tried to count those silent figures, and while unable to make positive had reason to believe that there must be something like a score or twenty-five in all—heavy odds in a stand-up fight, but since the surprise would be in their favor this evened matters some.

Besides, since the men with him had orders not to show themselves unless Charlie gave the word, the Indians would have no way of telling just what the number of their adversaries might be, and seeing the pink jackets of the dreaded Mounted Police in the firelight, they would in all probability be panic stricken.

Now the old scout was just behind the tree to which Bessie's mother was fastened; for Jim saw her start as if she had heard a word of hope close to her ear.

Then he knew from her action that her bonds had been severed; he was greatly alarmed lest the poor woman fall to the ground, from sheer weakness; but

she was a pioneer's wife, and had her share of courage, for with a desperate effort she seemed to hold herself erect, and a minute later glided behind the tree.

Then came the turn of the lad.

Evidently he had known something of what was going on, for his head was turned toward the spot where the rescuer was working.

Now he too was free from the hateful cords that had fastened him to the tree, preventing sleep from coming to his tired senses.

Jim was thrilled to see what the boy did.

Undoubtedly Robert was a chip of the old block; and knowing that his father had been slain his thoughts were all vengeance upon the red fiends who had swooped down on the frontier home and desolated it.

While he was standing there tied to the tree Robert must have settled in his mind just what he would do in case kind fortune should see fit to let him shake off his bonds, for he immediately stooped down, reached out an eager hand and clutched the rifle of the nearest warrior, who chanced to be sleeping close to the spot where the prisoners had been confined.

It was a daring act, and yet one to arouse enthusiasm in the hearts of those men who observed the same; surely it was worth while going to all this trouble to save so valiant a spirit from annihilation; at some future day that lad and his brother might yet make a pair of splendid candidates for admission to the ranks of this fine body of men, for from such sources is their number constantly recruited.

As the boy raised the gun he seemed to keep his eyes glued upon the figure on the ground; and Jim believed that if that Indian had so much as opened his eyes just then it would have signalled his death, for Robert was equal to pulling the trigger and doing the act.

Nothing of the kind occurred, fortunately for the success of their whole scheme.

The lad stepped back gently, putting his moccasined foot down as softly as a big cat might when creeping up on a bird; and so he vanished from view behind the tree, with his burning gaze still fastened upon the form that lay there, unconscious of how near death one may be even when in sleep.

Jim breathed easier now.

It began to look as though the best part of the hazardous game had been played.

They had only to wait now until McDonald had led the two rescued ones to a point of safety back in the woods and then all would be ready to clear the stage for the grand final scene.

Jim felt no compunctions as he thus contemplated the riot of death that he and his comrades meant to inaugurate among the sleepers; for ever before his eyes was the mutilated form of the man whom he had hoped some day to call father; and deep within his heart burned the vow he had taken while burying Mr. Arnold to spare not if fortune allowed him to strike the enemy hard.

It might have seemed the part of discretion had this little band now retired, and mounting horse sped far away, content with having rescued those who were held in bondage, and baffled the Indians in their plans; but that would have given these adventurous spirits no satisfaction for the efforts they had put forth; nor would it be punishing the rebels for their bloody work.

Charlie knew Indian nature, and understood that the sooner these plotters received a severe drubbing the quicker would the backbone of the rebellion be broken, and sweet peace come to the border.

That was one reason why he decided to linger and give these sleeping allies the surprise of their lives.

Five, ten minutes passed:

McDonald was evidently placing the two late pris-

oners in a secure spot, where he would leave them while he crept forward and joined his mates.

Of course should any of the Indians awaken in the meantime, and discover the escape of the prisoners, the attack could not possibly be delayed, else would all their advantage be lost.

It was with this idea in view that those who crouched in the shelter of the bushes kept watch and ward while waiting for the scout to join them.

Once Jim thought this was indeed about to happen, for a sleeper stretched himself and even sat up, rubbing his knuckles into his eyes; but after all it proved to be a false alarm, for after a few seconds the painted-brave again dropped over and sought a renewal of his sleep.

Jim's gun was bearing on him all the while, and had he but once turned his head to glance toward the trees where the prisoners had erstwhile stood that moment would have been his last.

So Jim had more than once lain in some lonely camp while a fringe of hungry wolves hung around, their red eyes fastened upon his every move, and yet not daring to attack the master of the gun; the present situation reminded him of it now, only there was no such thing as fear in their hearts, nothing save discretion.

Would McDonald ever come?

The very seconds seemed to be changed into hours while suspense gnawed at their hearts, and their fingers grew nervous from constant pressing against the triggers of their ready guns.

Another sleeper moved, and again Jim covered him, ready to do the needful if the occasion required it; but this fellow simply rolled over, and having eased his strained muscles resumed his slumber.

Lucky man!

He little suspected how he trifled with his fate when thus obeying the simple dictates of a tired body.

But now a slight rustling just back of where the

fighters crouched seemed to indicate that the man must have arrived, and would immediately take his place on the firing line.

It was time.

Those eager tigers could not have been held back much longer, with their intended prey just before them.

Every man now amused himself in picking his intended quarry, meaning to make every shot tell.

There was a sort of sporting instinct that prevented him from shooting at the recumbent figures of the Indians; just as a hunter declines to murder a bevy of quail running along the ground; he even shouts to startle the birds and set them on the wing, when he feels perfectly justified in letting fly with both barrels, he has given his game a square deal.

And that was just what Charlie meant to do now, when assured that all was ready for the surprise—let out a combined whoop that must startle the Indians and send a thrill of terror through their hearts; then, as they leaped wildly to their feet the flash of half a dozen avenging guns would meet their startled vision, and be the signal for that many of their number to drop back to earth.

The rebellion of Louis Riel was already well under way, and bearing fruits of the harvest of death that talks in the wake of all such murderous uprisings.

CHAPTER X.

TAKEN BY SURPRISE.—CONCLUSION.

Another signal ran along the line of recumbent figures.

It indicated that all was ready for the closing act in the backwoods drama.

A grand transformation scene was now on the car-

pet, and in this case it was not destined to be a settler's terror stricken family that would spring from innocent sleep to see the painted devils bringing in the door and waving hatchets that seemed called to drink blood; on the contrary the redskins themselves were destined to be victims in this event, with the boys of the Mounted Police doing the attacking act.

It seemed as though the one single minute that elapsed after that signal when the rounds were fired with terrible significance; at least Jim considered so.

He heard the usual noises of the night woods; and each trifling sound seemed to be like the roll of summer thunder, so that it was strange he thought that these sleepers did not arouse.

The hoot of an inquisitive owl that had taken up a position in a neighboring tree surely had enough of alarm about it to arouse such creatures of suspicion as these Indians; yet they did not move an inch; indeed, had they been dead they could not have lain more stagnant.

Then the dreadful moment arrived.

Of course it was the sergeant who gave the sign for the concerted shout that was to send waves of fear through each guilty heart.

Even the boy who hung beside Jim, "brother Jim," he called him now, was ready with his shrill high pitched voice, that added to the general clamor.

So the unfortunate wretch who huddled at the base of the towering oak may chance to hear the crash of thunder that accompanied the fatal lightning stroke whereby his life goes out as a candle is snuffed.

For as the band of Indians and half breeds sprang to their feet, galvanized into life by astonishment and fear, it was only to see the fitful flash of flame from half a dozen rifles along the fringe of woods around the camp, and realize that while they slept the enemy had crept into their midst.

It was not a battle, for to make such requires a determined stand on the part of the party assailed; and these amazed and terror-stricken allies, bewildered by the suddenness of the assault, hardly had a thought in the world just then save to escape the storm of lead that was sweeping through their already decimated ranks.

Jim called it a slaughter, and yet always before his mental vision he could see the pitiful picture of the father and husband who had been so rudely robbed of his life by these callous fiends and at such times his teeth would grit and his hand work the mechanism of his revolver with merciless precision.

If every member of the wolf pack were shot down it could never undo the great wrong which these rebellious hounds had been guilty, or restore the life they had taken without cause.

As for the others in the little coterie they just enjoyed the game as a picnic; their trade was war, whether in the line of running desperadoes or road agents down or punishing Indians who had committed deeds of violence; and what they were now engaged in seemed in direct line with their daily business.

Hotly employed as he was, still Jim found time to steal one glance at the lad beside him; and he found him busily employed placing another cartridge in the breech-loading gun he carried; already had he sent one bullet where it counted toward evening up of the debt he owed these murderous hounds, and if so be any of them were yet in sight when he was ready to fire again he meant to add to the score.

For a boy of fifteen Archie was surely a little hero, and Jim felt proud of the fact that he would soon be calling the little fellow brother in truth.

It was not the design of the sergeant to show the weakness of his force, lest the fact enrage the allies and prolong the affair; yet at the same time he wished to let the survivors of the assault know by

whom this sudden blow came, so that their respect for the Northwest Mounted Police might be increased.

To this end he showed himself several times, knowing his uniform would be instantly recognized, for some among the allies had frequently met members of the rural constabulary in their wanderings, especially the half breeds, many of whom had been to Winnipeg, and not a few to Ottawa and Montreal at times in the past.

The Indians were too badly rattled to think of making a standup fight of it; and besides, such have never been the tactics of the American native, who has ever delighted in ambushing his foe, and who when engaged in battle seeks to take advantage of the trees and brush, from which shelter he may shoot down his enemy.

Those who were in a condition to run immediately started to quit that little glade which had been the scene of their camp.

Some darted to the right, others chose the left, and a few tried to depart in a line directly across from the spot whence had flowed that stream of deadly fire which had worked such havoc in their ranks.

At another time there might have been something laughable in the ridiculous postures taken by these frenzied sons of the wilderness in their endeavor to escape the dread results of a second volley; but just then Jim was too much in earnest using his six-shooter to think of the comical features of the case.

The bang! bang! of firearms sounded like a miniature Fourth of July in the woods, with boys setting off giant fire crackers to the tune of shouts; only that in this case the jumping Indians were doing all the yelling, and fear was the prevailing note of their howls.

It was all over in half a minute, but there are times when an enormous amount of energy and de-

struction may be crowded into the space of sixty seconds.

Some of the Indians even in their flight had the nerve to turn around and discharge their guns toward the spot from whence all this tremendous flow of exploding gunpowder burst forth; but they were only showing that they might be reckoned brave customers in the face of a panic, and not that they entertained the least hope of downing any of these unseen foes.

A minute, and yet the scene resembled a battle field when the last Indian capable of moving had limped from the ground; almost a dozen figures lay around the smouldering camp fire, some wounded, others perhaps dead.

Even the greedy spirits of the uniformed policemen ought to be satisfied with this dreadful showing.

Jim turned his head away with a shudder, feeling that if ever the old adage of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life," was applicable it had certainly been carried out to its fullest extent now, and that the death of Mr. Arnold was truly avenged.

They had no reason to linger.

The Indians had received a severe shock, yet no one could say how many other bands there might be in the near vicinity; and perhaps before dawn came fully two hundred might be gathered, filled with a desire to turn the tables, and wipe out the daring little band of whites.

As those they had come to rescue had been released from the hands of the oppressor, it was only judicious to think of beating a retreat while the way was clear.

The horses were far from fresh, and since three at a time would have to bear double burdens the journey back to the post of the Northwest Mounted Police must after all prove a long one, during which they would be more or less subject to interference

at the hands of possible wandering bands of hostile heading toward the settlements along the lower Saskatchewan.

Picking up the woman and boy on the way the little company of intrepid souls continued until they finally reached the place where the six horses had been left.

Fortunately none of the fleeing reds had gone in this direction, so the animals were found all right and soon they were heading back over the trail they had come.

Through the balance of the long night they continued to put miles back of them, always heading toward the east, for it was there safety lay.

The mysterious west and the untracked north held only unseen dangers for those who carried white skins in these days of the great uprising; while the further east one went the greater the security became.

At dawn they halted, and dropped from their weary horses, to sink down and secure some sleep even before they could think of breaking their fast.

But not for a minute did they let the camp go unguarded with such red fiends scouring the woods for some hundreds of miles in search of whites.

Black McDonald looked out for that part of the job; although of course he had to share the watch with others in order to secure some rest himself; for despite his iron muscles and seemingly unflagging energies the veteran scout was human after all.

At about noon they partook of a light feed, a smokeless fire being built by the old ranger, who knew all about these various things so common with the red men.

After that the journey was resumed across rivers through seemingly interminable forests, over elevations and along valleys; but all the while pressing steadily eastward.

Again night, and with clouds covering the heavens,

as though threatening a deluge; which Jim hoped might be spared them, on account of the one woman in the band; so far as he himself, and for that matter the boys, it would matter little, for they were accustomed to taking whatever fortune chose to hand out in the shape of weather, heat and bitter cold, driving blizzards or pelting tropical rain, all had come their way in times past.

By night it was deemed best to go into camp and make ready for the expected storm.

These men knew how to erect shelter with only the aid of small belt hatchets, forming a roof of thick foliage that would shed any rain.

Here they remained the whole night, while the storm held sway; but with the coming of dawn the skies cleared as if by magic, and the way was open for a further advance.

Jim of course was uneasy concerning those who had continued down the river in the bull boat, although his good reason told him they could hardly be in any peril; and that the chances were ten to one that when he reached the post where Charlie's fellow troopers were gathering with the idea of being ready to join the forces coming from the east under competent generals, the fugitives of the Saskatchewan would be found there awaiting them.

And this was exactly as it turned out.

Mr. Calgary and the enlisted man had succeeded in guiding the flying bull boat to a safe anchorage within the stockade, where many frightened settlers were already gathered, having heard dire rumors of what was in the air, and fearing to remain longer out upon their exposed claims.

The death of Mr. Arnold cast a gloom upon the party; but even Bessie's mother realized that they had so much to be grateful for that she could not but give thanks.

Jim needed little urging to cause him to join the ranks of the Mounted Police for the war; and he was

in the decisive action where the forces of Riel met a deadly reverse from which they could not recover.

Every one knows that much of the glory attaching to that short but memorable campaign belongs, with that splendid body of men wearing the pink jackets of the time.

And from that day to this the force has constantly grown in efficiency until today it stands unrivalled as a menace to all evil-doers, both white and red.

Many of Canada's bravest sons have served their time on her vast western border in the ranks of the Northwest Mounted Police, and today both Robert and Archie Arnold may be found wearing the modern uniform of the service.

Of course Jim and Bessie were married many years ago, and live in the great wheat belt where Jim has a farm of many hundred acres.

They no longer need fear the coming of the red marauder by night; and yet there are times when both will grow thoughtful, and speak of those strenuous days when Jim rode on the trail with his brother's detachment of the constabulary, and fought with them side by side on the firing line.

THE END.

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